

School Emergency/Crisis Response A Call To Action

**U.S. Department of Education
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presented by

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Emergency/Crisis Preparedness

*You cannot afford to wait until the day
of an emergency/crisis to start
developing a response plan or
relationships.*

--Ed Clarke

Montgomery County, Maryland Sniper Crisis – October 2002

To view this movie, click [Response Video](http://www.ercm.org/views/documents/sniper.avi)
(<http://www.ercm.org/views/documents/sniper.avi>).

School Emergency/Crisis Response Phase

- Response – the action and steps taken to effectively address a school related emergency or crisis
- School districts must adopt a multi-hazard approach in developing systemwide and school-based response plans, strategies, and protocols
 - Criminal incidents – fights, bomb threats, school shootings, etc.
 - Natural disasters, severe weather, fires
 - Bus accidents, medical emergencies
 - Haz-mat incidents
 - Sudden and unexpected death of student(s) or staff
 - Terrorist incident—chemical, biological, or radiological

School Emergency/Crisis Response Plan

- A school system and school emergency/crisis response plan is a comprehensive, detailed, and organized process/method for responding to and effectively managing, as well as resolving, a school related emergency or crisis
- Response plan focuses on pre-incident planning
- Proactive efforts in prevention/mitigation, preparedness, and recovery validate and determine the effectiveness of response
- Review, analyze, and use data in response efforts
 - school-based and criminal incidents
 - school and community hazards
 - safety and security assessments
 - lessons learned from incidents and response

Response

The Most Critical Phase of Emergency/Crisis Management

Elements of Response/Decision Making Phase

- **Incident commander assesses the situation and makes immediate decisions dealing with life threatening issues**
- **The activation and implementation of your school system's and school's emergency/crisis response plan**
- **Response must be in an organized and strategic manner**
- **Activation of school's on-site emergency team (OSET) and/or emergency/crisis response team**
- **Lockdown or evacuation decision**
- **You have to manage the emergency/crisis!**
- **Don't let the emergency/crisis manage you!**

Response

The Most Critical Phase of Emergency/Crisis Management

Elements of Response/Decision Making Phase

- **Make clear identification of the decision maker/incident commander**
- **Incident commander briefs response team and ensures key assignments are carried out**
- **Reduce or eliminate injuries and/or property damage**
- **Incident commander will facilitate regular team briefings to assess the incident and response efforts**

Response

The Most Critical Phase of Emergency/Crisis Management

Elements of Response/Decision Making Phase

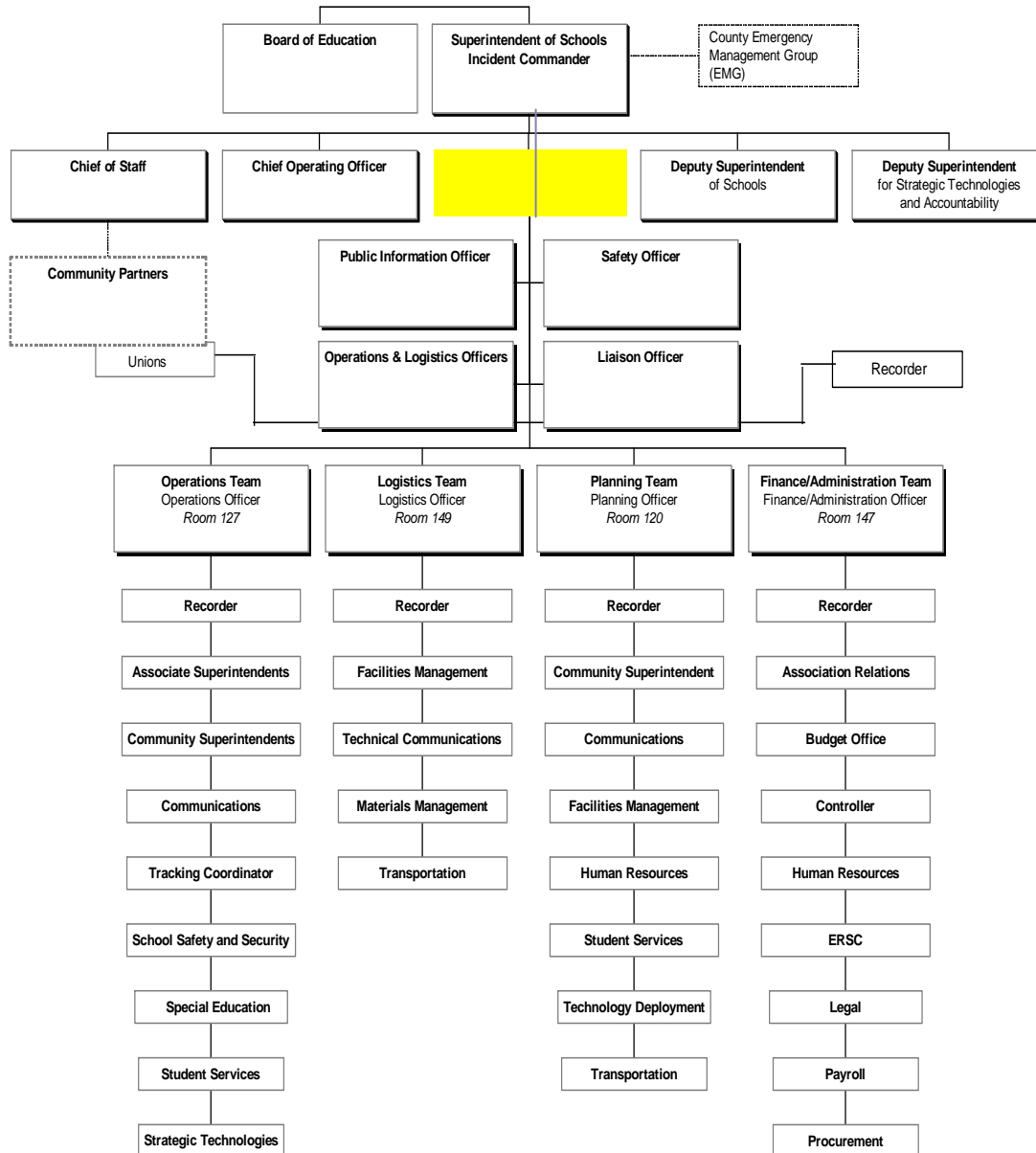
- **Communicate response efforts to impacted and involved parties, such as staff, students, parents, public safety, central office**
- **Start planning/implementing recovery efforts**
- **Incident documentation and debriefing**

Incident Command System (ICS)

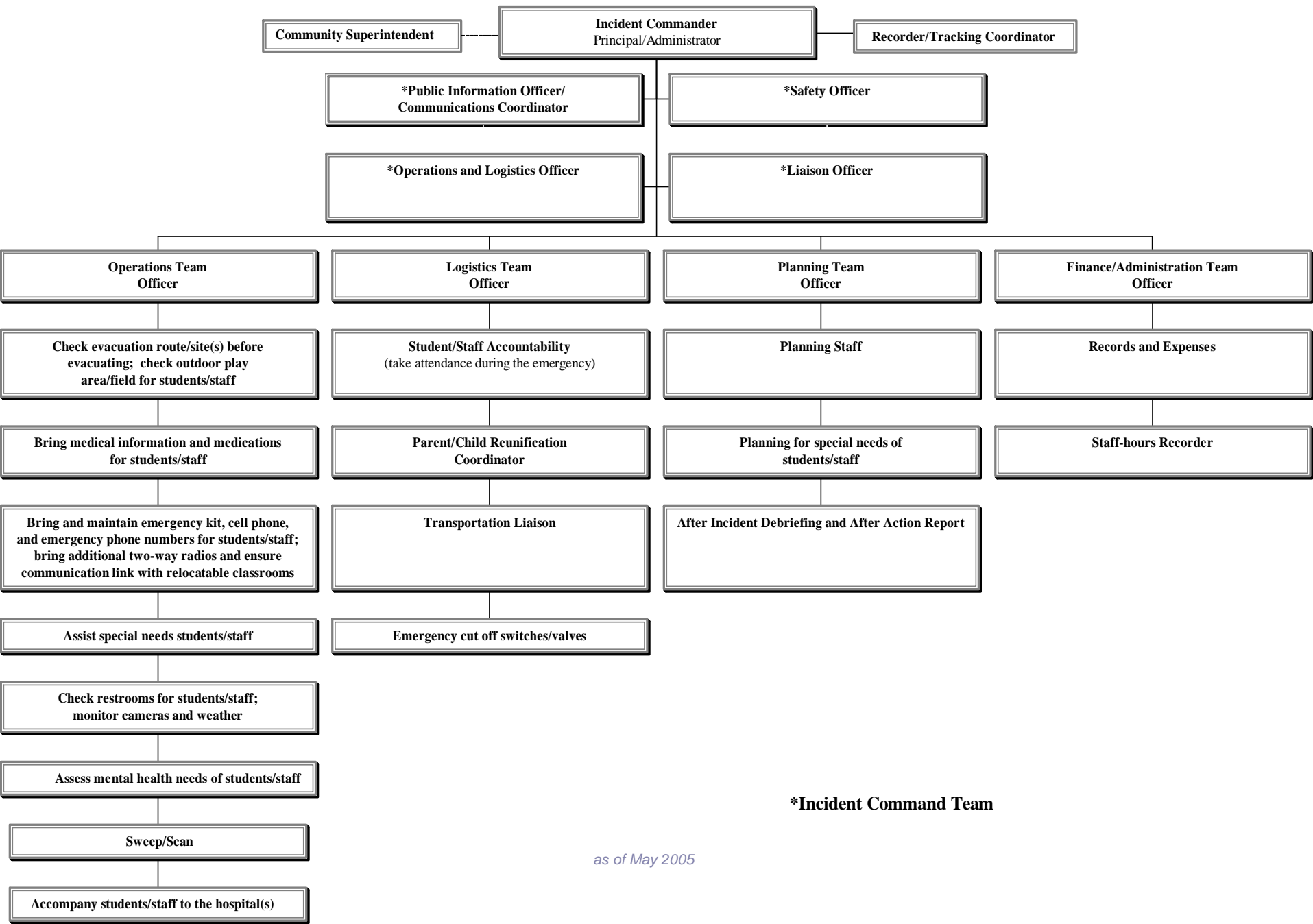
- **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) utilizes ICS as the foundation for our systemwide and school-based emergency/crisis response plans**
- **MCPS on-site emergency teams (OSET) have pre-determined duties and responsibilities**
- **The school-based incident commander is responsible for leading and resolving the emergency/crisis with assistance of the OSET**

MCPS EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Incident Command System (ICS)



MCPS School-based Incident Command System (ICS)



Role of School-Based Incident Commander

- School-based Incident Commander– responsible for managing the emergency/crisis in conjunction with public safety officials
- School administrator/incident commander must work collaboratively within the structure of a unified command
- School administrator/incident commander must understand that the location of the emergency/crisis may be a crime scene
 - maintain and respect the integrity of the crime scene
 - response staff should not become involved in the management of the crime scene
 - response staff must follow direction of the lead public safety/law enforcement agency

Role of School-Based Incident Commander

- Coordinate information sharing and any assistance with the public safety incident commander
- The school administrator/incident commander should manage and coordinate the school's response efforts from a school command post
- Assign a response team member the role of public safety liaison to coordinate information and response needs with the primary incident commander

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- School emergency/crisis response plans should include:
 - communication plan for stakeholders
 - on and off site command posts, media staging areas, and parent child reunification sites
 - multi-hazard evacuation sites
 - protocols for special needs students and accountability measures
 - utilization of emergency kits
- Develop emergency/crisis notification protocols/codes
 - different levels of notifications and actions required
 - clear instructions/directions for moving to lockdown status or enhanced level of security

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- Shelter-in-place and parent/child reunification procedures
 - Shelter-in-Place is an enhanced level of safety and security requiring housing staff/students indoors for a period of time. The nature and duration of the shelter-in-place will be determined by the emergency and by public safety officials
 - Parent/child reunification is the orderly and efficient process of re-uniting children with their parents/guardians
- Timely incident debriefing to identify lessons learned and make necessary changes to your response plan
- Documentation of all aspects of the incident in a detailed after action report

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- Develop positive working relationships with local public safety officers and officials
 - public safety participation in developing and reviewing your systemwide and school's emergency/crisis response plan
 - share your response plan with public safety personnel
 - public safety staff must be familiar with your building/campus, response and emergency notification protocols
- Develop a positive working relationship with your governmental emergency management team
 - establish a seat at the emergency management team table
- All members of your school's response team must be trained and understand their roles

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- Educate parents/students of the systemwide and school's emergency/crisis protocols and response plans
 - parents/students must know their roles in an emergency/crisis
- You must conduct emergency/crisis preparedness drills and test your systemwide and school's response plan
 - drills, tabletop/functional exercises validate response plans
- Create memorandums of understanding, mutual aid agreements, and partnership agreements with your emergency/crisis response partners
- Constantly evaluate/assess your emergency/crisis protocols and response plan to ensure continuous improvement
 - benchmark with other school districts
 - review national and local school related incidents

Emergency/Crisis Communication Response Resources

- Nextel emergency communication cell phone
- Two-way radios (walkie-talkies)
- NOAA weather alert radio
- Internal school computers
- Development of school specific Web sites and telephone trees
- School system Web site
- School system cable television
- National school notification service
 - www.schools-out.com
- Local government cable television
- Local emergency radio and television stations

School Emergency/Crisis Response

Summary

- School district's must develop systemwide and school-based response guidelines/plans to meet district needs
- Emergency/crisis response plan must be developed incorporating effective mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery strategies
- Response plans must include a multi-hazard approach
- Continual evaluation of response plans/efforts is key to a safe and secure learning and working environment
- Create effective public safety partnerships/relationships
- Educate all stakeholders on response efforts and plans
- Training and practice drills must be on-going
- Debrief every drill and actual response for lessons learned

Tips for the Successful School Administrator/Incident Commander

- Display a sense of calm in a stressful environment
- Clear, concise, effective communication is essential
- Problem analysis and critical thinking
- Good decision making
- Appropriate assignment of duties/proper delegation
- Attention to detail
- You have to manage the emergency/crisis!
- Don't let the emergency/crisis manage you!
- Critical debriefing and detailed after action report
- Continued training and practice
- Create a winning team spirit
- Patience, patience, patience
- Leadership, leadership, leadership

5P² Emergency/Crisis Preparedness Formula

poor
planning
produces
pitiful
performance

Grade: F

proper
planning
produces
positive
performance

Grade: A

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